

Changing Leadership, Unchanging Values

At the time of this writing, Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D., has only recently been appointed the 16th Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). For any organization, the advent of a new leader is a time of great excitement, energy, and some uncertainty in the face of change, however necessary or welcome. In the days following his appointment, Dr. Collins has had the opportunity to articulate his vision for the NIH in multiple venues, and we are particularly pleased to see our efforts align so well with his stated priorities.

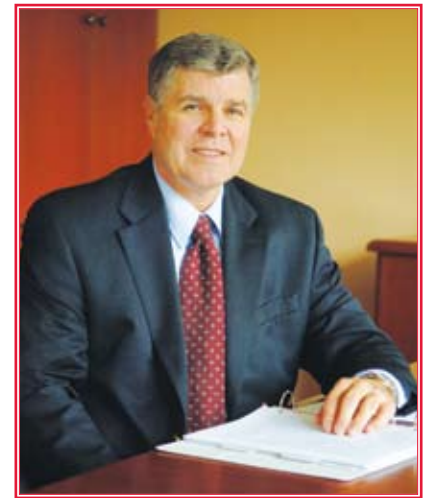
Dr. Collins has outlined five key themes that characterize his vision for the NIH: 1) using high-throughput technologies to broaden the scope of our scientific questions; 2) translating new discoveries into diagnostic, preventive, and therapeutic strategies for disease; 3) putting science to work for health care reform; 4) increasing emphasis on global health; and 5) reinvigorating biomedicine with new and stable funding that rewards risk as well as scientific rigor alongside high-quality training that builds the next generation of scientists.

In this issue of *CCR connections*, you will find several examples of CCR researchers and clinicians actively engaged in advancing this ambitious agenda. In “Big Things in Small Packages: Small RNAs Play a Big Role in Cancer Biology” and “Brain Cancers: Not All Made the Same,” we see two examples of CCR clinical scientists applying comprehensive gene expression analyses to uncover biomarkers in liver and brain cancers, respectively, that will one day help to inform the choice of treatment. In “Cut to the Cure,” Staff Clinician Marybeth Hughes, M.D., tells us

about the daily mix of research and patient care that is part of her overall ambition to translate discovery into treatment and use treatment to inform discovery.

The CCR leadership is also seeking more effective ways for our scientists to partner with industry to translate their research into treatments. In “Partners in Science: The Umbrella CRADA Streamlines Collaborations Between CCR and Industry,” we learn about a collaborative agreement between CCR investigators and AstraZeneca that will serve as a model for future engagements with industry. As our former CCR colleagues Nancy Jenkins, Ph.D., and Neal Copeland, Ph.D., note in their commentary “Science in Singapore: Aiming High for Biomedical Research,” research institutes like ours and pharmaceutical companies should be natural scientific allies—the science needed to support successful drug development is too complex to go it alone.

We introduce a new series in this issue—In Conversation—in which we will be talking with some of our CCR fellows to learn about their experiences



(Photo: B. Branson)

Robert H. Wilttrout, Ph.D.

and aspirations. An important part of our mission is to train the next generation of scientific leaders, and we want to inspire other young people to invest their talents in biomedical research. Of course, as Dr. Collins has emphasized, for science to flourish and inspire the next generation to service, its leadership must provide the means to support that service. In “Breast Cancer Genes: When the Sequence Is Not Enough,” we follow the 10-year journey of CCR Investigator Shyam Sharan, Ph.D., which has led to innovative tools to tackle the persistent mysteries of breast cancer.

We look forward to working with Dr. Collins over the coming years to further our mission: To inform and empower the Nation’s research community by making breakthrough discoveries in basic and clinical research and by developing them into novel therapeutic interventions for adults and children with cancer or HIV infection. The scientific strategies to fulfill this mission will no doubt change over time, but the goal remains the same—to prevent, cure, or make cancer a manageable, chronic disease.